

[Eem Hurst]

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Rangelore

Tarrant Co.,Dist.#7 [38?]

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FEC

Eem Hurst, 72, living at Hurst, Tex., was born in Claiborn co. Tenn., Mar. 5, 1866, at which time his father, W.L. Hurst, operated a whiskey still. [??] Hurst emigrated to Texas in 1877 and settled on a tract of land in Tarrant co., located adjacent to Bear Creek, two miles N. of [?], Tex. He farmed the land for four years, then moved to Bedford, Tex., 12 miles [?] of Fort Worth. There he bought a 70 acre tract of land for the sum of \$70.00 and one yoke of oxen. Eem Hurst was reared to manhood at the Bedford settlement. At the age of 18, he began his range career on a horse ranch owned by the Slaughter brothers. His next place of employment was in Young county on the Hoffman brothers' ranch. After terminating his service with the Hoffmans' ranch, he went to the Pecos River range section of Texas and worked at a 'Lazy S' cowcamp, owned by the Slaughter brothers. He remained with the 'Lazy S' ranch for two years and then returned to the Bedford settlement, where he farmed and has since remained. His story:

"I'll be 73 years old if I stay with this game of life for a tudder year, that is for the most part of it. That thar will be Mar. 5, 1939. I saw the light of day for the first time back yonder in Clairborn co., Tenn. We lived in the uplands and my pappy, W. L. Hurst was his name,

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raised corn and made whiskey. Them thar days 'twas not 'gainst the law to run a still without a permit and such, but the way my father run his, it was called a wildcat still.

“When things got sort of settled after the Civil War, we piled our stuff in a covered wagon, hitched two mules to it and started a drag for Texas. That was in 1877. It took us six weeks to make that thar drag. We hit rocks, mud, hills, sand, streams and rivers on the way. Thar whar times when we could ford the streams and some of 'em we had to float 'er. But, we got here and landed in Tarrant county. C12 - 2/11/41 - Texas 2 Pappy found a piece of land on Bear Creek, two miles N.E. of [?]. Of course, [?] warnt thar then, the land belonged to [?] Daniels then. That thar land pappy rented and thar we settled and we farmed four years on that thar place.

“At the end of four years work farming on the [?] Daniels' place, pappy had made enough to buy a piece of land by throwing in an ox team with what he had. He bought a 70-acre piece in the Bedford settlement for \$70.00 and one good yoke of oxen and got a clear title to the land, and 'twarnt bad land either.

“Most of the houses then whar built of logs, but our farmhouse was better than that, because 'twas built of weatherboard and reckoned as a right pert house them days.

“The Hurst clan must have liked the Bedford district, because thar has been Hurst folks living thar every since.

“A spell of time after we settled at the Bedford settlement a postoffice was put in and the burg of Bedford was started. Thar soon was a blacksmith shop, store, and a bench for the loafers to sit and do thar whittling. After all these years the burg is about the same, except it has lost the postoffice.

“Bobo was the first postmaster, DeCamp was the blacksmith; Bobo also sold the groceries and dry goods and furnished the whittling bench. My brother, M.B. Hurst, fetched the mail from Dallas to Bedford and rode a hoss, thar and back, carrying the mail sack.

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"I worked up a job with a few of the settlers, toting thar mail from the Bedford office to the homes. One of the places I fetched the mail to was old man Booth's cow ranch, father of Ray 3 Booth, who farms the old headquarters location and is a cattle buyer and lives on the old place. I rode a hoss and learned to ride a hoss to perfection toting the settlers' mail. Of course, riding a hoss was learned by me back yonder in Tenn. But thar is a difference twix sitting on'em and riding 'em. Back yonder in Tenn., all our hosses whar raised as sort of pets and thar whar no wild pitching critters to handle. When we hit Texas 'twas the Texas cowpony we had to straddle; and handling 'em took riding, not sitting.

"Them Texas critters had the staying ability far beyond the Eastern critters. Hearken to this, what my brother did one day on a trip to Dallas to fetch the mail. He had agreed to ride a hoss in a match race for a fellow at 2 [??]. Thar whar many match hoss races them days and my brother was a top rider, also a light weight, so was called on to do riding often.

"It was 32 miles from Bedford to Dallas, whar the postoffice was. Brother made that drag, to Dallas and back, in six hours on a Texas pony, and the critter warnt any the worse for wear.

"My first ranch work was on the hoss ranch belonging to the Slaughter boys. That whar in 1884 when I took up with the outfit. The camp was located near/ whar Coppell is now located, just about on the line of Tarrant and Dallas counties. Five waddies worked thar, looking after around 500 hosses.

"We roosted in a tent and one or the tudder of us waddies messed up the chuck. When I say 'twas messed up chuck, I mean 'twas sure messed up at times. Thar whar one or two fair-to-middling chuck messers in the crew, but most of the time we 4 whar too damn ornery to do the job right.

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"The outfit fetched us plenty of chuck supply, such as canned vegetables, sorghum, corn meal, wheat flour and beans by the bushel. The beef whar more or less all around us. If we needed beef, and warnt too ornery to go fetch it, all we needed to do was pick out a fat yearling which suited us. I worked a spell of years for different outfits and I don't think I ever lined my flue once with beef belonging to the outfit I was with.

"Just so sure as the sun sat at night and came out in the morning, beef, beans, sop, lick, biscuits and black coffee whar dished out for our tape worms. Some of the times, when we wanted to get some fancy chuck, we'd have a mess of son-of-a-gun stew. Now, that thar is a mess fitting for lining your flue. It has all the ingredients in it which the cooky can lay hands on. The portions of each ingredient is judged by instinct. If you go measuring stuff the stew will sure be spoiled.

"Anyway, the chuck must be fitting for humans, because we whar always in tip-top shape for doing our work. We could stay with our work long as conditions called for.

"When a norther hit we'd be called on to stay with the herd from start to the finish of the storm, because the critters whar bent on finding better shelter than whar we had 'em.

"Hosses are not so tolerably bad about going on a stomp, but two critters sure would drift fast for shelter. The stallions would lead the mares to some river bottom, or some such place whar thar was some timber for a wind brake. Hosses will come back to thar home range, after a buster stops, but it may be a spell 5 of two or three days before the critters would show up.

"Thar whar certain folks tolerable bent on picking up stray hosses for the purpose of giving the critters a home. Them kind of folks got busy during the time a buster was raging, sort of looking to help the critters to find a shelter. The critters them folks found we'd not see again. So, to prevent the loss of critters, we'd stay with the critters during a storm. Maybe we'd be a couple days and nights in one stretch without any sleep.

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"Sometimes when the buster warnt so bad, we'd give each other a little spell of rest, but when a fellow had a chance to get a spell of rest, he'd have to do his sleeping fast, because it would be only for a couple of hours at best.

"Of course, when the weather was decent, we sat pretty. 'Warnt much work to do then and was sort of a lazy man's job, except during the roundups, then thar whar plenty work to do. Also, when wrangling critters, we had some tough work which took the leaf lard off our ribs.

"The roundups whar held in the Spring and Fall. We worked one bunch at a time. Hosses of a herd don't range together. The animals stay in bunches. Each stud would have around 25 mares and with the bunch of mares would be the colts and the geldings, to the total bunch around one stud would be twix 75 and 100 critters. The hosses ranging on the Coppell range generally were separated into four or five bunches which grazed off by tharselves.

"The roundup job was to brand the colts, castrate the young males and cut out the critters we'd want to wrangle. Those we'd 6 cut out for wrangling would be placed in the corral and after the roundup work was finished we'd do the busting.

"We had to work one bunch of hosses at a time, because it wouldn't do to throw the bunches of hosses together unless the studs whar snubbed, because those critters would more than likely get into a mixup, and I'm telling you 'tis a mixup when two stallions gets to fitting. One of the things we'd have to watch for all the time was to stop a mixup if two studs met.

"The mixups generally started because one of two studs tried to steal a mare away from the tudder. Stallions wont 'low any tudder stud to fool around his ladies, but will try to coax a mare away from a herd. Well, if he gets catched at it he's in for a mixup.

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"Stallions do about as much fitting with thar teeth as with thar foot, and they try for the throat to shut off the wind. [With?] thar teeth, the animals can cut out hunks of meat. Thar are plenty of gore spilled during a mixup twix two studs, and the critters will stay right in thar and pitch till its power runs low and can't go on.

"We wrangled around 100 hosses a year. Those critters whar for supplying the cowponies to the Slaughter cowcamps which the Slaughter people run in different places.

"Our way of busting hosses was to just bust it and no monkey work. Of course, we had 'em in the corral and we'd rope and snub 'em, then put a blind over its eyes and a saddle on its back. We'd let the critter stand with the saddle on its back for several hours, and then mount it, take the blind off and take the rocking. The 7 hosses then would go to pitching. Some would pitch like hell and tudders would come to thaw in just a few minutes. But, with any of 'em, you'd have to know your riding.

"I've seen stars and moons, in all sizes and shapes, and four or five million at one time, while arguing with a critter about letting me stay on its hump. I'll say I whar a top wrangler and my deadly enemies gave me that kind of a send-off, but I've argued with some critters which busted me. Ride any of 'em - hell, thar whar some critters which the only fellow that could stay with 'em whar a dead man tied on. Say fellow, thar whar some critters that died in thar tracks pitching. I've had two that did and several which may as well have been dead for all the good they whar after the argument.

"We'd ride 'em from a half to a dozen times and then the critters whar ready for cow work.

"I nested with the Slaughter outfit four years and then joined up with a cow outfit. I went to Young county with a herd of critters for Hoffman brothers. The outfit whar drifting through Tarrant county to the Young county range section and needed a hand, so I joined up.

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"We drifted the herd of about 1,000 to a camp south of Olney and turned 'em loose on the open range.

"Thar whar several camps thar then. [?] had a camp thar at the time and was about the biggest outfit in the section.

"Thar is whar I got some knowledge of pert rustling twix two ranchers. Both men whar hipped to the tudder fellow picking critters and working the brand over. One fellow's brand was 'IC' 8 and the tudder's brand was 'IG'. It warnt much of a trick to change a C to G or a G to a C. So, to beat the game, one fellow changed 'IC' brand to read 'ICU'. But, the change didn't work, because the tudder fellow changed his brand to read 'ICU2'. The last I heard of that mess the two fellows agreed to wipe the slate clean and start from scratch. Hoffman had a fair camp for the waddies to roost in and we whar dished up about the same kind of chuck the Slaughter hoss outfit put out, only we had a belly-cheater which was pretty fair and the chuck warnt so hard to take.

"That thar Young county section was about all a cattle range at that thar time and all 'twas to be seen was waddies and critters. While going through a herd you'd see many different brands mixed in from tudder herds. Of course, at the roundups all the outfits would work under one [head?] and the different critters whar cut out and the calves branded with the iron according to its mother's brand.

"While with the Hoffman outfit I saw a real cattle drift. 'Twas in February and a real sleet buster hit in and the critters drifted from more than a 100 miles from the N. of us. Critters in our section went that far S. we just quit trying to hold the critters because 'twarnt any use.

"Thar whar thousands of critters drifting past that had gotten away from tudder ranches N. of us and just swept past our camp. The first night of the storm I layed awake all night, listening to the horns of the drifting critters clashing.

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"The critters started moving the day before the buster hit and the old rawhides calculated a hard spell of weather was 9 behind the movement, and so 'twas. 'Twas sleet, snow, rain and bitter cold along with the rest. Lots of critters whar lost, being too weak to stand the chill.

"Thar whar a drift fence running from about 20 miles S. of Olney to the Archer county lines, but the critters went around it and what didn't whar piled up at the fence, and thar whar hundreds found dead at the fence.

"I reckon I stayed with the Hoffman outfit about two years, then jiggled out to the Pecos country, S. of Pecos City. Thar I nested with a Slaughter cow outfit. 'Twas called the 'Lazy S' ranch, because thar S was made laying down for thar brand.

"A fellow named Conners whar the top-screw at that cowcamp and he worked from 15 to 20 rawhides. The names of the rawhides who worked thar I can't remember, because most of them whar called by thar nicknames. Like the belly-cheater, he was called 'Cooky' or 'Punk'. If Punk had a tudder name, it whar tethered out somewhar and out of use.

"We did lots of riding on the Lazy S, because the critters held fairly well bunched. We stayed with the herd until the animals whar bedded down and then just two riders kept an eye on 'em through the night. The night riders changed shifts every two hours. The main thing night riders had to keep thar eyes peeled for was the rustlers. The rustlers would watch for a chance to scatter a herd and then pick up the strays.

"When I worked for the Lazy S the law had rustlers fairly well under cover, but once in a while thar whar a steal.

"Our shelter whar tents in the Winter time and we slept in 10 the open during the nice weather of a Summer. [?] built a shelter for the hosses out of mesquite posts set upright in the ground. 'Twas a shade for them in the Summer time and a wind brake in the winter.

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"The wages paid run around \$5.00 a month for the general run of cowhands, which whar about the average wages them days. Compared with today, them thar wages [??], but we had heaps of fun with what we got.

"When we had a few bucks in our pockets, and we'd have 'er after pay time, after the roundup we'd drag the town without fail. The waddies would do anything they set their heads to doing and generally they would get plenty of foolishment in thar noodles.

"I never [?] with a gang of men who liked to blow thar horn as them waddies did, and 'twas about the ability of their hosses that they seemed to do the most blowing. When we whar holding the roundup, we'd set around the camp before rolling in for the night and chin. Some of the blowing whar stretched right smart.

"J.W. [?], who [???] well digger here in Fort [Worth?], used to tell some good hoss deals. Lewis whar about the top hoss rider in the country, besides a good teller of hoss deals.

"One night [while I whar with the Lazy S,?] the waddies got to [telling about the great?] hosses they'd seen and rode. One waddy chinned about a hoss that could tell time on a watch. The waddy said:

"[???] to do whar to point to the hour I wanted to be rolled out and lay the watch whar the critter could see it. [When?] the hour came around the hoss would poke me with its nose'.

"That whar a pretty smart hoss, but a tudder waddy comes in 11 with this [?]:

"I rode a hoss while with the 'JA' outfit which could read the JA's brand'.

"Well, that hoss whar a pretty smart critter, too, but J.T. Lewis [?] comes in with a [?] and told of a critter he once owned. He said:

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"I owned a hoss once which never stepped in a hole or stumbled in a ditch. This hoss was a pert jumpey and when we'd come to a ditch or a stream the critter would jump 'er'.

"At that point, a tudder waddy chinned in and asked:

"Suppose the stream whar too wide for the critter.'

"Lewis answered:

"Well, sar, that very thing happened with us once or twice, but the critter was smart. After it had jumped 15 or 20 feet and saw it couldn't make 'er, then the critter just turned back. It just couldn't be made to stumble in a stream. I trained the critter about jumping wide streams afterwards so that instead of turning back it would make the streams in two jumps'.

"I never rode a hoss that would turn back after it saw 'twas no chance to finish a jump, but I have rode 'em that would never step in a hole. [?] hosses whar few in number and in great demand and whar always saved for night work, and whar called night [critters.?] Once in a while a critter would show up that never would miss a [hole?] such critters were soon shunted.

"When I left the Lazy S outfit, I came back to Bedford and [?] to farming. I have been thar pretty much ever since.